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OF WINE

ARE FAST ON THE POUR !!!

An Interview with several of N.YC.'s Growing Bunch of Wineslingers.

love the 1988 movie Young Guns starring Emilio Estevez, Kieifer Sutherland and others. As a group of gunmen in the Wild West, barely old enough to shave, they set out to avenge the loss of their friend but in the process take on the fastest veteran gunfighters. Their reputations spread, they become feared and revered. In the process, their leader, teen William Bonney, is given the name "Billy the Kid."

Wine sommeliers in New York City are getting younger and their taste buds faster on the draw. Among today's Generation X'ers, this breed of decision-making wine experts is blazing trails of their own. Perhaps part of the reason is that the fastest-growing age group in the U.S. today is the legal drinking age up to 27 years old. While brewers and distillers unabashedly target entry-level drinkers, wine is a different story. This is a generation that "discovers" wine when they move through their 20s. They are known as "Millennials" because most of them will have reached adulthood after the year 2000. John Gillespie, President of the Wine Market Council, says, "These young drinkers are a significant force in shaping the market for wine in the U.S."

This new breed of wine sommeliers is more interested in reading and learning about wine than their elders, due in large part to the wealth of information now easily attainable through the Internet, books and vineyard tours. Their demanding patrons know more about wine than ever before, so they have to absorb as much knowledge as they can. There are increasing numbers of wine events for the up-and-coming such as the Young Sommelier Competition hosted by groups such as the American Chapter of the Court of Master Sommeliers. They enter from all across the country to be tested in wine theory, practice and blind tasting competitions.

Following is a very "partial" list of some Young Gun wine pros that are flooding the New York City restaurant and wine store scene, uncorking their enthusiasm, eagerness and ever-expanding knowledge for the wining and dining public.

Upon meeting a couple of them and seeing the victory notches on their belts, I just had to ask, "Are you even old enough to drink?"

In alphabetical order, these Fast Five Young Guns in their twenties and very early thirties are:

** * EDDIE ALLEN **

Buddakan Restraurant

This labyrinthine restaurant is an amazing experience, created by restaurant mogul Steven Starr. A true hotbed for both fine food and nightlife action. I jokingly call Eddie, an easy to smile Texan, the Butch Cassidy of the Meatpacking area.

Question: Where are you originally from?

Eddie: Houston, Texas.

Q: What influenced you to get into the wine world?

Eddie: I was fortunate enough to have great parents who understood and appreciated the value of wine. So at an early age, was allowed to taste and try them and we discussed them often as well as the food we were having with it. Our vacations always seemed to revolve around good, wine and scuba diving. Luckily I had the opportunity to travel to some of the world's great wing regions even before finishing school.

Q: What is your professional wine experience?

Eddie: I've been in the restaurant industry for over ten years and



have worked in just about every position, both in front of the house as well as a cook.

Q: Did you have a mentor that influenced you the most? Eddie: My parents are my biggest influence. As for mentors, I have a few who've all helped me along this crazy path.

Q: What are you favorite wines?

Eddie: I love Alsace and the Rhone. Depth, complexity, and grace. But as a very American Texan sommelier, I have to say I love to support and showcase all the great wines being produced across our country. The Finger Lakes and Washington wines are some of our most interesting and also the ones I see having the most potential.

Q: Which is your favorite wine right now?

Eddie: Right now, I love Deiss. All of his wines show such an amazing complexity and sense of place. Bebelheim '02 Pinto Gris is what I had last night.

Q: And your all-time favorite?

Eddie: Picking that is like picking an all-time favorite song or painting; it changes with the mood! I'd have to say that 1994 D.R.C. Montrachet and 1961 Haut Brion are up at the top of the list, but don't forget wines like Heitz '90 Martha's Vineyard or William Selem Vista Verde Pinot.

Q: How do you keep your palate sharp?

Eddie: By drinking a lot! And tasting/smelling everything I

can, i.e. socks, fruit, gasoline, flowers, fresh cut grass, old pizza, etc.!

Q: Where do you see your interest in wine taking you? Eddie: I see myself writing and taking photos (my other career) of vineyards, etc. And also making wine and getting into the importing side of it.

Wine will continue being a big part of my life because it brings people together and makes them forget their worries. And most importantly, it makes you smile!

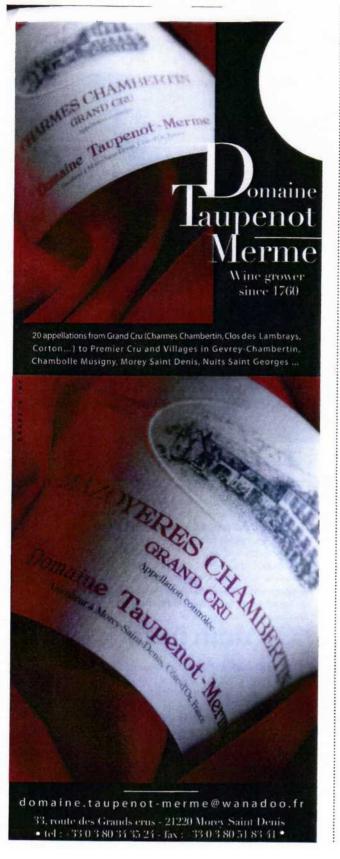
* * * CHRISTY CANTERBURY * * *

Smith and Wollensky Restaurant Group

S&W is a hugely successful fine dining restaurant group that began in New York but now extends to Miami, Las Vegas and beyond. Overseeing the wine duties would seem a daunting task for even a seasoned veteran, but Christy, also from Texas, is young and fearless and a quick shot, just like Wild West legend Calamity Jane.

Question: Where are you originally from?

CHRISTY: Mt. Pleasant, Texas, a very small town of 15,000 people located in a dry county!



Q: At what age did you form an interest in wine?

CHRISTY: At 20, studying in the South of France and backpacking around Europe. First sip of wine was a crude rosé from a local Provencal cooperative.

Q: Tell me of your working history in wine.

CHRISTY: I began working at Vintage New York on the weekends while still working at a private equity firm. I was looking to transition to the wine business and wanted some sort of experience - anything. Vintage NY was a great choice because I could work two days per week in the business at a time when wine stores could only be open six days a week in NYC. I worked seven days a week for five months and continued with Vintage while I was looking for my first full-time wine job. When I finished my finance work, I actively sought out jobs where I might be able to combine my business background with a pursuit of wine knowledge. One day I walked into Italian Wine Merchants and found the perfect opportunity. I became and created the position of their Director of Business Development for two-and-a-half years. Looking to broaden my understanding of the wine world, I left to pursue freelance writing (Wine Business Monthly, Vineyard & Winery Management), worked as the Eastern USA Public Relations Director for New Zealand Wine Growers, taught and researched important special projects for importers looking to bring new regions/wineries into their portfolios, as well as pursuing a few other opportunities. Having collected a broad array of experiences, I looked for yet another I hadn't tackled, and found it as National Wine Director of Smith & Wollensky Restaurant Group. What a dynamic, fun-loving bunch of people! I'm involved in absolutely everything wine-related, from education to buying to analyzing our margins. The responsibility is tremendous; the rewards are equal. I also continue to freelance and just contributed to the Italy entries for the Professional Wine Reference coming

Q: Did you have a mentor above all others that guided you? CHRISTY: No, I had to trust my own instinct. I did/do, however, have an amazing support group of friends in NYC as well as strong parents, whose faith helped keep me afloat.

Q: What are your favorite wines?

CHRISTY: Like music, clothes and art, a wine choice is an expression of that moment in time, so it really depends. Less philosophically, I am terribly, terribly fond of Grüner Veltliner (especially) and Riesling from Austria. I also love Northern Rhone Syrah, particularly Côte Rôtie and Hermitage, as well as old wine of any sort. I love to see their development unfold.

Q: Your favorite wine right now?

CHRISTY: A surprise wine last night: 1982 Bollinger Récemment Dégorgé (Recently disgorged). Generally, for the summer, roses from Grenache and Pinot Noir. Mosel Kabinett Rieslings, and my newest affection, the limey Australian (Clare and Eden Valleys) Rieslings.

Q: Your all-time favorite?

CHRISTY: Impossible to say. The best wines are those shared with special people at just the right moment. I'm lucky to have shared a few such bottles.

Q: How do you keep your palate sharp? Many tastings? CHRISTY: I am in the Master of Wine program and sat the exam for the first time this year (results due in September). I prefer to blind taste when possible and always taste in multiples. Tasting a wine in exclusion is nowhere as enlightening as tasting it against its peers or against other regions or varieties. Q: Where do you see your future in the wine trade? CHRISTY: The great thing about the wine world is that it reinvents itself with every vintage and that any versatile person can undertake many different positions. Stay tuned - who knows!

*** TOM GANNON ***

Rothmann's Steak House 3 E. 54th Street in Manhattan.

This crowded midtown steakhouse with a very lively bar scene that often extends out into the street is part of a group of 17 restaurants in the NY Metro area.

Long-haired, lanky, and easy smiling Tom is a true pleasure to be around. This sommelier is also friends with several actors that I know, for Tom is a skilled playwright. He also reminds me of the famed gentleman gambler of the Wild West days, Maverick.

Question: Where are you originally from?

TOM: Cincinnati and Detroit. Born in, moved to, moved back

Q: At what age did you form an interest in wine?

TOM: At 23, when I was the head bartender at Fleur de Sel in very early 2001 - it had opened in the fall of 2000. We were a very young, inexperienced staff and Andrew Bell (President of the American Sommelier Association) helped train us in wine and service. My interest in drinking was well established; my palate was not.

Q: Tell me of your restaurant experience:

TOM: Cyril Renaud, at Fleur de Sel, is easily one of the top three chefs in New York. I learned a lot there (and ate some of the best food I will ever have) with Andrew's staff trainings. He basically shamed or forced me to take his viticulture class with the agreement that I would only pay him for the wine of the classes I showed up to. Later, when I left Fleur de Sel, he got me the interview at Rothmann's. I met my two would-be bosses, Gil Travalin and Pat Felitti, and it was sink or swim. In a 225-liter cask. I was the sommelier for three-and-a-half only slightly bleary years and was lured for almost a year to the dark side of on-premise sales. Learned a lot, loved the portfolio, missed the restaurant and friends I worked with. When my successor and predecessor (my friend Romain Porzio) went to Le Bernardin and Gil called with an offer to come back, I knew he wouldn't have to push too hard. I came home.

Q: Did you have a mentor above all others that guided you? Tom: Andrew Bell and Gil Travalin. Andrew is a great teacher and got me the interview with Gil. Gil took me in two days after I turned 25 and what little I knew and what little I tasted expanded in days. I've been very lucky with the people I've met and the wines I've tasted through Gil and some of his close and very personable friends, notably Ron "The King" Metzger. Gil's got a great palate and knowledge and an ease with wine and a passion which influences the entire wine program that our group has. It is very, very rare that someone who has left



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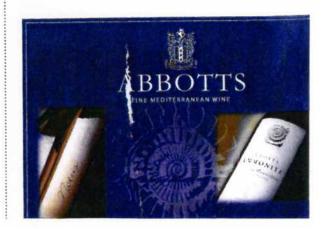
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SAVIGNY-LES-BEAUNE

GEVREY CHAMBERTIN



THE TOTHE GUNS OF WINE ***

the restaurant side for the distribution side crosses back. I came back because I missed Rothman's food (best steaks in New York), missed being able to taste everything, missed interacting with the guests, and sharing wine. And working for Gil, I get paid to learn from a friend.

Q: What are your favorite wines?

Tom: My favorites are all over the world. Washington wines are recent favorites: Spring Valley Vineyards, Delille Cellars, Syzergy (aligns with my roommate's show on Broadway). I am a steakhouse guy so I love Bordeaux and Rhone wines but I also love Alsace and Chablis, probably because I don't get to drink them as much as I'd like. Chilean syrah and pinot noir have been interesting to

Q: Your favorite wine right now?

Tom: Now it is '81 La Louvière Blanc. I had this wine three years ago as the first wine in a lunch at Rothmann's where there were 19 bottles consumed between Ron, Christophe Roumier, Danny Oliveres, Jeff Sokolin, their lawyer and Danny's wife. She stopped in the middle just after I had opened the '64 Chateau Magdelene. The La Louvière was striking in a field of wine that at one point included the '64 and '48 Cheval Blanc side by side. I mentioned to Ron later that I liked it better than the '83 white Bordeaux we drank that day (including the Haut-Brion) and he agreed and lamented the fact that it had been his last bottle. I was lucky to have found a case and have been slowly working my way through it. I still have a few bottles.

Q: Your all-time favorite wines?

Tom: That might be the '88 d'Yquem, one of the vintages of the Cheval Blanc above, or also the '85 Cheval, but I have a soft spot for Certan de May which is one of the wines that first woke me up to the possibilities of wine.

Q: How do you keep your palate sharp?

Tom: Taste often, taste always.

Q: Where do you see your future in the wine trade?

Tom: Somewhere I enjoy myself that gives me enough time to pursue other interests as well.

*** PHILIP PEPPERDINE ***

Barbounia Restaurant, 20th St. & Park Avenue

This chic "in" restaurant serves exquisite Mediterranean fare accompanied by a lively bar scene.

The "aging" but still quick draw wine-slinger of my Young Guns group at 31 is fun-loving Phil. Just like the famed Wyatt Earp, who drove the bandits out of Dodge City, Pepperdine is a seasoned veteran with a feared reputation...His guns are still smoking. To top it off, some ladies that I bring over to the hip Barbounia think Pepperdine looks like actor Orlando Bloom.

Question: Where are you from?

Pepperdine: I'm homegrown Kansas but a large part of my youth was spent in London, England, where my mother was born and

Q: At what age did you form an interest in wine?

Pepperdine: Quite young; at what age exactly I don't know. My grandfather and great grandfather were in the wine and restaurant business in London. I remember, around six years old, fetching liters of wine for granddad Carlo and Oldpa. We would get Oldpa's cigars and we would carry the wine and stogies up

in 2002 and applied for a job. I started as a cashier.

Q: Did you have a mentor above all others that guided you along the wine trail?

Jessica: Yes. Andrew McMurray, VP of Sales at Zachy's. Andrew's taught me so much and he's always believed in me, even when I had trouble believing in myself. Another great influence has been Ben Nelson, who knows more about wine than anyone I know. And he's kept the passion!

Q: What was your big break in the wine world?

Jessica: When Andrew asked me to be the Beaujolais buyer for the store. It was like five items, but I was really excited about it. Champagne followed shortly thereafter, and so on.

Q: How do you keep your palate sharp?

Jessica: Champagne, and lots of it! No, seriously, I just keep tasting everything I can, good and bad. I also try not to be too harsh on myself if I'm having a dull-palate day. It just happens, sometimes for no reason. So I just keep tasting and hope tomorrow is better.

Q: Your favorite wines?

Jessica: My favorite wine right now... I have little wine obsessions that last for short periods of time when I get fixated on a particular style or winemaker. I think its all part of the learning process. At the moment, I'm captivated by a champagne, Henri Giraud "En Fut de Chêne" 1995.

Q: Your favorite wine ever?

Jessica: Monprivato. Any vintage, any time, anywhere! For some reason, Mauro Mascarello's prized plot has stuck with me. It's

always been the model of specificity to me; there's no mistaking this wine from any other in the world. There's something profoundly unnamable about it. I keep wondering if the honeymoon will end once I can name that essence!

Q: Where do you see your future in the wine trade?

Jessica: Lots of people in the industry fantasize about being a winemaker, but I really enjoy this aspect of it. I enjoy the connection I have with winemakers, and the opportunity to taste wines.

Attention readers: if you are wondering if your taste buds have grown "too old" to appreciate wine, scientists in Sweden have uncovered new information about the way the body breaks down and renews itself. In the June/July issue of New Scientist Magazine, substantiated surveys used carbon-14 dating, a radioactive isotope, to precisely gauge the age of body cells. For example, does all of your body eventually get renewed? Some parts do, some don't. The good news for us wine lovers is that the taste buds regenerate on average every ten days. Therefore, if your palate feels old or flat these days, help is on the way!



